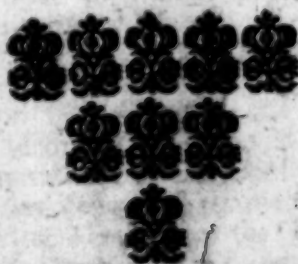


THE  
SHORTEST WAY  
TO  
PEACE and UNION.

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*By the Author of the True Born  
English-man.*

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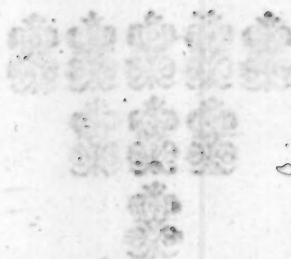


LONDON,

Printed in the Year, 1704.

THE  
SHORTEST WAY  
TO  
PEACE AND UNION

By the Hon. Ashley  
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LONDON

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# THE SHORTEST WAY

To Peace and Union, &c.

## INTRODUCTION:

**I**T was always my Opinion, that whoever should go about to widen the Difference, or encrease the Misunderstandings between the Church of England and the Dissenters, were the real Enemies of both.

'Tis an Unhappiness that the sober, thinking Men on both sides are sensible of, that there should be any Difference at all; and I am of the Opinion that would either side incline a little, the Breach might be easily less'en'd, tho' perhaps not quite clos'd.

And if ever a temper of Charity and Love should chance to prevail in this contentious unhappy Nation, I am fully perswaded, even a Capacity as weak as mine, might be able to propose Methods which might bring the Two Parties much nearer together.

But while there is a breach of Charity, there can never be a union of Principles; and till the railing Spirit on either side is suppress'd, the breach widens rather than heals, and all tends to the confusion of the General Protestant Interest both at Home and Abroad.

That there are Persons on both sides, who either from Passion or Prejudice, Interest, or other worse Reasons, continue to encrease the unhappy strife, by rendring both sides suspected, and odious to one another, is a Truth too plain to be question'd, and 'twould be an Impertinence I cannot dispencc with, to spend time in the proof of it.

Nor is it so much my design to examine who they are, which in my opinion would be marking Men out for the General hatred, and exposing them to be ston'd in the Streets. If I could prevail with both sides to cease and discourage the practice, the Persons would see their Errors, and might be forgiven by God and the Nation.

You are very much in the right of it, says a Gentleman, that in defence of some angry People, resents a late unhappy Book of mine, call'd, *The Shortest Way*, You are in the right of it to conceal Names, lest your own should stand first in the Catalogue.

Truly I cannot deny but I am very sorry I publish'd that Book, because the ill Management of it, has prevented my further Explaining of it; and now, because I unwarily let some things slip, at which the Government have too much cause to be Offended; and tho' to them who judge by out-sides, my Design is Condemn'd, yet I cannot but protest to the World, that neither in that Book, nor in any thing I ever wrote, did I ever de-



‘ sign to raise a Feud between the Dissenters and the Church of *England* ; I never said, or believ’d, the Church of *England*, as a Body, design’d to ruine and destroy the Dissenters : But that there are some Men in the Church, who, indeed, are not of her, and who have by their Writings and Preachings testified the rancor of their Spirits, and the earnest desires of their Souls to have the Dissenters ruin’d, is most true, and at those I levell’d ; however, an ill Marks-man I have been thought, to aim at one thing and shoot another.

‘ Nor am I making an Appology here to move the Mercy of the Government, I have already resolv’d in that Case, that as a good Subject does not willingly offend, so having by Inadvertancy fallen into the publick Displeasure, I submit to the Clemency of my Superior, with this Resolution, *It is the Queen, let Her Majesty do with me, what seems good in her Eyes.*

‘ Nor shall the Apprehension of the Severity of Her Majesties Resentment, cause me to cease the endeavour, of bringing, as far as writing can do it, a fair Reconciliation of Parties in View : When a Fray is begun, the Standers by may part them, and bring them together ; but if they will not shake Hands, ’tis their own Fault.

‘ And that I may inform the World, that as far as I have been able, this has always been both my principle and practice ; I Challenge the worst Enemies I have to find out, among any thing ever publish’d by me, the least Shadow of a Temper differing from this healing principle.

‘ To this end, the following Sheets have been compos’d some Years ago, and have now very small Additions, as to Circumstances, and were design’d as an Introduction to a healing Conjunction of parties, which I had form’d in my Thoughts ; for I doubt not, but I could easily lay down such a Scheme of a General Union of Protestants in this Nation, as to politick Interest, as well as Religion, as no man on either side could oppose, without being a manifest Incendiary, a Disturber of the Publick Peace, and an Enemy to its establish’d Government : But while I am in the Hands of the Law, I think ’tis time to have done writing ; and if the Spirit of Peace would but possess the Minds of Men, there are better Pens and better Heads than mine to make the proposal.

‘ It is not for me to tell our Governours they take wrong Measures with the Dissenters ; and the Dissenters would be angry if I should tell them there is Ill Blood among them ; and some Church Men would think themselves injur’d, if I should say they imprudently encrease it : But I heartily wish I could say, all these three things were false and Idle Chimera’s of my own.

‘ And yet I would be content to be condemn’d to *Newgate* all the Days of my Life, if I did not lay down such undeniable Testimonies of the Truth of those Heads as should convince all the unbiass’d Judgments in the Nation and after that, subjoin such a Method of peace, Union, Love and Charity among all the protestants of this Nation, as no Man but he whose Reason was a Slave to Interest, passion, or some ill Design, could find in his Heart to dislike.

‘ I do not say but any Man of either side, whose Heart was touch’d from on high, with a Zeal for the good of *England*, for the prosperity of the Protestant Interest, and for the Glory of the present Government, might add to, amend, and I hope at last finish so desirable a Work ; but I am fully persuaded, I could State preliminaries of such a League of Amity, such a Union of Affection, as should make us One people, with One Heart, and One



Interest, equally Zealous, Loyal, and Affectionate to the person of the Queen and the Establishment of the Government; and that Government remain just the same, untouch'd, unalter'd Constitution that it is now.

But as I am not worthy to be the Author of so great a Work, so neither shall I venture the farther Oppression of my private Circumstances, by endeavouring to reconcile parties that resolve not to be reconcil'd, unless I can receive the protection Due to a Messenger of peace.

**I**T has often been objected to the Dissenters, by those who, with intent to widen our Breaches, are fond of blackening them as a party, That they are Enemies of Government; That their principles are incompatible with Monarchy; and that they are therefore dangerous both to the Church and State, that they must be continually plotting against, because naturally discontented with the present Establishment; That they hate the Queen because she loves the Church, and the like.

From hence the furious Authors have drawn such Consequences, as were the Assertions true, would be natural enough; That the Church ought to provide against them as a dangerous Brood hatch'd under her Wing, that will lose no Opportunity to destroy her; That they ought to be so far from being admitted into the Administration, that they ought not to be trusted with the privilege of Freeholders, or to Vote for those that are, and the like. *New Association, Page 1.*

But if after all that can be said on this Subject, it will appear that the true Interest of the Dissenters, is bound up in the prosperity of the present Establishment; that their Safety depends upon the protection of the Government; and that they cannot be guilty of endeavouring the Subversion of Monarchy, without striking at the Door of their own prosperity, and bringing themselves into all the Confusions and Distresses they can wish to be delivered from; then the Arguments must cease of Course, the Consequences must be absur'd, because the Causes are Untrue; the Dissenters must first be arraign'd for Fools, before they can be indicted for Rebels; and ought to be sent to *Bedlam* and not to *Newgate*.

Mankind at least, such as are in their Wits, are properly said not to be capable of doing what they cannot do rationally; what they cannot do without prejudices to their own Interest they cannot do; that is, they cannot do it without being forsaken of their Senses, their common Understanding and their Honesty.

In order to come to a State of my proposition, I must premise, that when I speak of the Dissenters, I mean the General Body of all Sorts of protestants, who separate in Worship from the establish'd Church; and when I speak of the Church of *England*, I mean the General Body of Orthodox Conformists; and I take no Notice of the private Designs or private Tempers of Men, who may broach their own Opinions, or declare Sentiments quite Differing from the Body of their own party.

Thus, when some hot violent Men have broke the Rules of all Modesty in their Anathemas on the Dissenters, and have doom'd them to a worse Fate than the *French* Hugonots, it cannot be agreeable to the Justice of Argument, to brand the Church of *England*, with any part of their principles, unless they had approv'd them by some publick Act of the Church, or merited a Claim to the Charge by a General practice.

And thus, tho' there may be some people among the many several Sects of Dissenters, who may possess something of Antimonarchical principles, and  
may

may retain the Spirit of Rebellion, the General Body of the Dissenters ought not to be branded with the black Mark of Rebels, Enemies to the Government, and dangerous to the Nation, unless they had committed some Crime as a Body which should merit such a Character.

And as on the one Hand, I am fully perswaded, that the Dissenters of this Nation, taking them in general, except as before excepted, are not desirous of any Change of Government; so I think 'tis easie to make it out, that while they are Masters of their Wits, and have their Eyes open to their True Interest, they can never desire to have any part of the Government alter'd chang'd, or otherwise settled than it is.

If any Dissenter be of another Mind, or if any Man, to sully their Character, will suppose it of them, I would be glad to see it made out what sort of Settlement, suppose it were in their power, could they make which would be more to their Advantage.

To come to make the paralel, 'tis necessary to observe a State of the Dissenters Circumstances under the present Government.

First, They enjoy all their Civil Rights, their Liberty and property stands upon the same Foot with their Church of England Conforming Neighbours; in Matters of Right or Wrong, 'tis not examin'd whether they are Dissenters or no, but if they are *English Men*; 'tis not requir'd of them to concern their Spiritual Capacities, which their Temporal; their Estates are their own, and their possession of them secur'd by the same Laws, their Inheritances descend by uninterrupted Succession to their posterity.

Secondly, Their Religious Liberty is tolerated by a Law, and no Conformity is exacted of them, they are invited to Church, but not driven, Excommunications, Confiscations, &c. for not coming to Church, are all taken off, the Talons of the Ecclesiastical Harpyes, at *Dottors Commons* are Cut, and those Birds of prey have their Wings pinion'd by the Law.

Thirdly, This Liberty is Universal to all Sorts, Kinds, and seperate Societies of Dissenters, from the Quaker to the Jacobite Conformist; the Spirit of Persecution is laid, and has left off haunting us in this Nation; every Man serves G O D his own way, and there is no Restraint in Matters of Religion or Policy, only that in the latter, to preserve the Government in the Hands of the Churches Friends; all Persons who have any Share in the Administration are oblig'd to conform; and this is by Act of Parliament, that is, to say, it is an Act of all the People consented to by them all, in their Representatives, and therefore is what we ought to submit to with Chearfulness.

I know some object the Reasonableness of such a Law as makes Religious Ordinances the Test of Capacity for Civil Employments, and much has been said on that Point, that the Law was made to please one Party, and on Purpose to oppress another Party, and the like.

If the Dispute were between *Christians* and *Pagans*, or *Christians* and *Jews*, it might have some Reason in it, and none would be fit to be trusted with a Branch of the Government, who were in principle, mortal profess'd Enemies to it, on Account of Religion, and in such Case a Religious Conformity would be a proper Test of the Party.

But waving these Arguments, we are not to consider what, in right Reasoning, we think ought to be a Law; but what actually is a Law enacted by the Legislator of the Nation, and to which, as Freeholders, we have given a tacit Consent, and therefore bound our selves either to that Observation or the Penalty.

Besides, What is the publick possession of places, or Offices of Trust, in a Government, to the Case of Religion? they who seperate from the Communion of a Church, cannot in Reason, expect to be entertain'd in the Service of that very Church; and they that seperate from the Church, ought to consider Places and Offices beforehand, and to examine, whether they can forego them for their Consciences or not; and if they did so, they would not be so frequently foregoing their Consciences to possess them again.

And I cannot but wonder at, and condemn the Injustice of such Dissenters who would have those People, to whose Communion they cannot, or will not joyn, receive them into equal Advantages of Honour and of Profit, of Trust and Management, in the Politick Concern.

I cannot approve the Equity of it, nor I wou'd not have the Dissenters cover it, nor had they the Government in their Hands would they admit, it themselves.

This Coveting Offices of Trust, Honour and Profit in the Government has been the Cause of that Occasional Compliance, which to the Dishonour and Shame of the Dissenters, has branded them with too much Levity and Religion.

But in all Professions, and in all Ages, from the Young Man in the Gospel, whose Temptation was, that he had great Possessions, Covetousness and Ambition have been Snares to Religion; but neither does this Loosness of Principle lie as a Just Charge upon the whole Body of the Dissenters; nor shou'd they bear the Error as a Brand upon the General Character, any more than the Church of *England* ought to be branded, with that General Odium of Cruelty, and barbarous destructive principles against their Dissenting Neighbours, because some of their Ministers from the Pulpit, have thundred out this Fiery Doctrine to their Hearers.

And therefore, in equal Justice to both Sides, I think 'tis Just to agree, that neither party ought to be denominated from the Hot destructive Latitude of a Few, but from the general Practice, and known Principle of the Body, and Generality on both Sides.

That the Church of *England*, as a Church guided by their Genuine Temper, as Christians and *English* Men, and govern'd by their known Principles, and the Canon of their Constitution have nothing so Antichristian among them, as can leave room to suggest, they would be the Destroyers of their Brethren, and set up Fire and Faggot among us, is plain from various Circumstances of Time and Action. The Revolution, the Act of Toleration, and their present Resentment of this Temper lately presented to them, Unmask'd, are Modern Testimonies of it.

That the Dissenters, in general, are fully satisfy'd with the Circumstances of their present Settlement, and the Toleration they enjoy, and no otherwise uneasy, than as they have industriously been made to apprehend the Privileges and Toleration they enjoy are aim'd at, and endeavour'd to be lessen'd or overthrown, is manifest.

First. Because all the late Reign, while their Toleration and Privileges were secure, they were entirely Easy, fully pleas'd, and had nothing to wish, more than they enjoy'd: And Secondly, That under all the Uneasiness they have in this Reign express'd, the renew'd Assurances of the Continuance of their Toleration from the Royal Promises of the Queen, have been as Life to them from the Dead, and at all times revives their Satisfaction after it has receiv'd any Shock from the Violence and Threatnings of a party.

What, tho' among the Church of *England*, or among the Dissenters, there are



are Incendiaries, some on one side, who till they knew it was wrote by a Dissenter, hugg'd the Book, call'd, *The shortest Way*, like an Oracle, and a new Invention that deserv'd a Patent for the Practice ; some that have preach'd the same Thing, Printed the same Thing, and declar'd it to be the best and properest way in the World, to settle the peace of the Nation, as well as the Peace of the Church ; some on the one side, who are angry at being dispossest of their Hopes of good places, and can dispence with Sacraments, &c. on Occasion, to enrich themselves.

Both Sides, if they would study the Nations peace, the Queens Honour, and the prosperity of our Commerce would industriously crush and discourage the Extreams on either Side, and in the Middle might be found, that blessed path of peace and Union, which would lead the whole Body of the *English* Nation, to the full Enjoyment of that universal Charity and Love that every honest Man wishes for.

Here would be no Encroaching on one another, no Jealousie of parties ; the Dissenters would have no Reason to seek places, to keep such out as would endeavour to Ruine them ; nor they could no more Grudge the profits and Advancements of Secular Trust to the Members of the Church, because they would be satisfy'd ; they wou'd not misapply their power to the Injury of their Dissenting Brethren ; and the Church Men, when they saw the Dissenters cease to Encroach upon them, would have no room for any uncharitable Suggestions, nor any Ground to Charge them with seditious practices or Designs to overwhelm the Government, subdue Monarchy, or erect Confusion and intolerable Anarchy.

In order to this happy Regularity, I proceed to state my proposition, that 'tis the True Interest of the Dissenters in *England*, to be govern'd by a Church of *England* Magistracy.

And as I pretend, in what I write, to as much Impartiality as I can, so I am not at all careful of displeasing parties, if I do it in a direct pursuit of Truth.

And therefore while I first turn upon my Friends the Dissenters, tho' they may be angry with me, I cannot help laying down this as the first Reason of my Proposition : viz. That they are not qualified to be trusted with the Government of themselves.

Nor do I go back to the years of Forty one, about which such a *Potter* has been made, as if all the present Dissenters had been in Arms against their King, tho' not one in Five hundred of them was then Born ; or as if they had all a hand in the death of King *Charles* the First ; or at least, with St. *Paul*, in the Case of St. *Stephen*, had been consenting to his Death : But as a quarrel, which was ended before I was born, I have nothing to do with it ; Let those people accuse the Dissenters of that, who have undertaken to justify the Church of *England* in a Case something like it, as the late Revolution.

I think the Fable of the Country men, who made their address to *Jupiter* for good Weather for their Harvest, is something at Emblem of what I mean ; they who dwelt in the Plains and moist Ground desir'd fair Weather, and they who dwelt on the Hills desir'd Rain, upon which the Deity order'd them to go together and consult of it, and when they could agree what Weather to ask for that would please them all, they should come again.

Now, if on the late, or any Revolution, it had been proposed to the Dissenters to have the Government of this Nation, I mean the Civil as well as Ecclesiastical Authority settled in their Hands, and in order to such a Settlement

ment they were all met together to consider of it, I would be glad to be inform'd in what manner they could possibly have agreed about it: 'Tis not my present Enquiry what manner of Government they would have agreed upon, I have elsewhere sufficiently prov'd, that the Constitution, Interest, and Genius of the whole Nation would lead them to a Monarchy, and to the same individual Monarchy now settled; but my Question is, in what manner they would agree in the settling this very Monarchy?

The General body of the Dissenters are compos'd of Four sorts, and those Four so opposite in their Temper, Customs, Doctrine and Discipline, that I am of opinion 'tis as probable all Four should Conform to the Church of *England*, as to one another.

There is the *Presbyterian*, *Independant*, *Anabaptist* and *Quaker*; now, if these Four were met like a *Poish* Diet on Horseback to choose a King, he must be a great deal wiser than I that can but guess out of which Party all the other Three could consent to Name a King; or by which party all the other Three could consent to be Govern'd; for that would be the *English* of it.

The *Independants* could never bear *Presbyterian* Government, that has been tryed already; for they once pull'd it down by the Ears as intolerable.

The *Anabaptists* in general, declare the *Presbyterian* would setup Persecution from the old Principle. That *Presbyteries* are *Jure Divino*, and therefore to them, a *Presbyterian* Government would be all one with *Papery*.

The *Presbyterian* would never brook an *Independant* or *Anabaptist* Government, because they count the one Sectary, and hardly admit the other to be Orthodox Christians.

None of the Three would bear the thought of a *Quaker* King, the Novelty would make Mankind Laugh at the Proposal, the Splendor and Magnificence of a Court, and the necessary Defence and Offence which the Confederacies and Interests of Nations require, are things so inconsistent with this plain dealing Professor, that he must cease to be a Quaker when he began to be a King; and they would then be much in doubt what Religion, and consequently what Party he would choose; and therefore none of the Parties would agree to him.

So that the whole Body might, like the Country men, go home and consider of it, and come to the Assembly again when they were agreed upon the Point.

And if the Crown of this Kingdom does but remain in a Succession of Church of *England* Monarchs, till these Four can agree which of them shall Reign, the Benediction of the *Scotch* Parson to King *James* the First may be fulfill'd, That they shall Reign as long as the Sun and Moon endure.

In the next place were the Government fix'd in any one of these Parties, without the Concurrence of the rest, it does not appear to me that any Single Party would be strong enough to maintain themselves; for those who did not freely consent to, would not willingly assist the Government; and every little dissatisfaction of Parties would shock the Constitution. Revolutions would be as frequent as Insurrections; and Mobbing our Governors, be as familiar as a Street Riot; consequently property would be never secur'd, nor Families preserv'd; for 'tis very rarely seen in Governments that Crowns shift Sides, but the Patrons of the last Government Sink under the Oppressions of the present; The Favourities of one side, rise upon the ruins of the last; and the next turn wheels them under the Stage, and sets up others; and so on to the General Revolution of all things.

'Tis true, there is a thing call'd the People, the Multitude, the Rabble, or in a more Modern Term, the Mob: these like a great Rast of Timber in



a River which receives the Tides from the Sea, are ever a Float, and drive this way or that, as they are hurried on by the General Current: 'Tis true also that their Force is irresistibly Violent, and nothing can withstand them: but still like the Raft of Timber, when the force of the Tide is spent, and the Stream turns, they are as certain to Drive back again with the same Violence of Motion as ever they were to move at all: so that there is no more advantage from this Crowd to one party than there is to another. The same Mob will Huzza a King to his Throne, and Halloo him out of the Nation.

The strength therefore of any party in this Nation consists in the power of its real Interest: for let the best King that ever Reign'd in England, be invaded by the worst, if he beat him in the Field but one Battail, he is gone, the Nation is all his own.

This is too plain from History: *William the Conqueror* fought but one Battail for the whole Nation; and I know not one Instance in all our History, of any Prince that fought two, except King *John*. *Maud* the Empress Invaded King *Stephen*, and in one Battail the whole Quarrel run over to her. In the Case of *Henry the Sixth*, and *Edward the Fourth*, one single Battail, at a time, shifted the Crown of England Five or Six times; the like in the Case of *Henry the Seventh*. In the Duke of *Boumoult's* Case one Fight ended the Dispute: And in our late Revolution, no Fight at all, but the appearance of an Army, gain'd the General Concurrence of the people.

In Case therefore of the Government being to be tendred to the Dissenters, they would never agree among themselves who should have it; and if any one party obtain'd it without the consent of the other, he would never be able to hold it: and the Nation would be expos'd to inevitable Confusions and Distractions.

Possibly the Dissenters may take it ill, if I should say they are not qualified with a Governing Temper: and since they are not like to be tryed, 'tis needless to enquire whether they are or no: but I am apt to think the most sensible Men among them will acknowledge it, *these Brethren would fall out by the way*: they want some qualifications which are very necessary to Government, as Charity, Patience, but particularly penetration and Generosity.

I allow this may be from the Accidents of their Circumstances, and the paucity of their Numbers: the Men of Conscience being, by the Scripture, Direction, not to be look'd for among the Wise or Noble; that is, not among the politicians nor the Gentry.

But God Almighty can qualifie, *says a Dissenter now*, and give a Spirit of Government where he pleases to give a Call to Governing.

I confess that freely, and therefore it seems to me very plain, that where he has not bestow'd the Spirit of Government, he has not design'd to entrust the power of it: and therefore I would advise the Dissenters in England not to concern themselves about it, at least while they are not ill Treated, Oppress'd or persecuted by those who have the power of Governing.

Upon these Considerations, and more I could name, if I thought these were not sufficient, I verily believe, that were the Four sorts of people which I have nam'd as constituting the Body of the Dissenters, enquir'd of separately, they would all Vote the Government into the hands of the Church of England.

What would the *Anabaptist* say, if 'twere enquir'd of them by themselves, *Who will you have to be your King, a Presbyterian or a Church of England Man?* They would most certainly answer, if their General Answers in like Cases may be regarded, the Church of England: For under them we shall have a Tol-



Toleration; but th' other will persecute us in particular from all the rest of the Dissenters, and from the old principle of *Pure Drains*, will say of all that are not of their own Opinion, *Compell them to come in*.

What will the *Presbyterian* say, if the Church or *Independents* were proposed? They'd all cry out the Church of *England*: for these *Independents* will be for Levelling us all to their own narrow principles, till we shall have no Government left at all, and at last no poverty, but run all into Fifth Monarchy Men, and make us sell our Estates for the use of the Saints.

If the *Anabaptists* and the Church were in Competition, they'd Cry out again, give us the Church of *England* Government, for these have no Government at all: we know not what to say of them, and hardly know whether some of them are Christians or no.

As to the *Quakers*: neither would they brook any of the Three, nor any of the Three them: so that natural Consequences, the Reason of the Thing, the Temper of the separate parties, and in general, the Interest of the whole, would make all the Dissenters Unanimous, in desiring to be govern'd by the Church of *England* Magistracy.

I can yet see no Tolerable Objection against this Doctrine: and I do not think it betters an Argument at all, to form trifling Objections, on purpose to answer them.

But if this Doctrine be true, then some Consequences are to be drawn from it, which would, if well improv'd, lay the Foundation of an intire peace, a firm Union and Confidence between the most opposite parties in this Nation: so that speaking of publick Interest, there should never be any Contention, any Strife, jealousies, or Animosities more: the Government should for ever esteem the Dissenter, tho' differing in Opinion, yet as Loyal and Affectionate to their Interest as any of the rest of its Subjects, since having devoly'd all their Thoughts into this one Resolution, That 'tis best for the Nation, and best for their Interest, that the Church of *England* party should be the governing, ruling party, and be intrusted with the Civil power: they could not imagine any Danger from them, because no people ever willingly Act against their own Interest as such: and the Dissenters not knowing where better to fix the Government, than where it is, could never be so bewitch'd, or forsaken of their Reason, to endeavour to alter it.

On the other Hand, the Dissenters having no Desire to alter, could have no Advantage to disturb the Government, and consequently could have no Reason to struggle to wind themselves into any part of the Magistracy, especially being fully satisfy'd, that it was already in the best Hands it could be for the Benefit of the Whole.

All these little Dissatisfactions, and Strife of parties for Elections, would die as Effects, the Original Strife about the Center of the Government, being once remov'd as the Cause.

Occasional Conformity would be casual and indifferent, neither worth one parties straining their principles to comply with, nor the other parties their Wits to explode: there would be no need of it on one Hand, nor it would be of no ill Consequence on the other Hand.

The General Consequences I draw from what I have alleag'd, are such as these.

First, Those warm Gentlemen of the Church of *England*, who think they do G. O. D good Service in railing at the Dissenters, as Subverters of the Church and of the Monarchy, and show their Wit in first painting the Robe of Rebellion in all its bloody Colours, and then dressing up the Dissenter

in it, as if the Coat fitted none but him, are very much to blame; my Charity disposes me to hope they are unwilling so; but certainly they are effectually and eventually Enemies to the Peace of the Church, and the Prosperity of the Crown; all the Aversion of Parties is owing to them; all the ill blood which is to be found among the Dissenters, is owing to the Menaces of these furious People, who in Print and in Pulpit, Entitle the whole Church and Government to the Extasies of their Passions, and speak in the plural Number, as if they were then commanded to Curse *Jacob*.

These were the proper Authors of the *Shortest Way*, tho' some Body else may suffer for it; and these Gentlemen, with humble Submission to the Government, unless of their own accord they Disist, will, whenever our Rulers see their own Interest, be ordered to do it.

'Tis farther manifest, that this Way of treating the Dissenters can have no present Signification, for the Government, and Her Majesty in particular, having sufficiently testify'd their Abhorrence of destroying, hanging, or banishing all the Dissenters; To what purpose then can be the Treating them with so much indecent Contempt, and keeping them in constant Alarms from the perpetual menaces of the Pulpit? No Indignation of the Clergy, or any Body else can hurt them, while Her Majesty thinks Her Self oblig'd to promise them Liberty and protection.

Besides, it seems indecent, that when the Crown indulges them, the pulpit should threaten them; that the Clergy should persecute them from the press, when the Government tolerates them from the Law; this Way of these Gentlemen treating the Dissenters, can have no Signification but what looks disloyal and disrespectful to the Queen, and manifestly turns to, their own Disadvantage, as to Character, and to the Disadvantage of the Government, whose undoubted Interest it is, to have a free and intire Love, and uninterrupted Confidence in all its Subjects.

Secondly, If this Doctrine be true, then the Dissenters have been Ill manag'd, and it is in the power of the Government to make them all Zealous, Hearty and Loyal to the present Establishment, in every part of it, to make the Dissenters easie, and themselves easie with them; and the Governing power, yet remain, not only by a Right, but by a voluntary, true Concession of parties; That the Dissenters shall not only obey the present Authority, but choose it, love it, and believe it to be the best, and the best for them; and that if it were dissolv'd to Morrow, would be the first Men in the Nation to restore it to the very single, undivided posture it now flourishes in, and to maintain it there.

The Queen would be serv'd with an undivided Loyalty, without concerning themselves who shall come next; all parties will earnestly pray, that Her Majesty may continue long, and the Glory she will obtain by bringing about so happy, so unexpected a Union of divided parties, shall be greater in Ages yet to come, than all the Conquests of Her Armies, or the Success of this doubtful War.

If any should be so weak, as to say Her Majesty does not desire any such Union, tho' the Notion is too absurd to merit any Remark, yet it leads me to take Notice, that really, whatever Her Majesty desires, there are some people who certainly do not desire it.

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There can be no Body in the Nation but must desire this Union, but such as are for *The Shortest Way*. 'Tis manifest, the Government understands the General Interest of the Nation too well, not to desire such a Union: 'Tis plain, Her Majesty has express'd Her Resentment at the Suggestion of any thing Cruel to any of Her Subjects; and Her often expressing Her Royal Tenderness for all Her Subjects, puts it out of doubt, She would be glad to see them all in the same path to Heaven with her self; but while She cannot Hope for that, She cannot but desire to see them shaking Hands, and united in Hearts in the Journey, tho' the Steps they take are in different parallels.

And her Majesty cannot but be pleas'd to see that all Her Subjects, of whatsoever Opinion in Matters of Religion, should joyn in a more than ordinary Zeal and Affection for both Her person and Government.

Another Inference from the premises, is this; Those Dissenters who covet places and preferment in the Government, and encrease the Scandal of their principles, on Account of Occasional Conformity for that End, are also to blame, especially at such a time as this.

If it be the True Interest of the Dissenters to be under the Government of the Church of *England* Magistracy, let those to whom places, Salaries, and Honours are of more than common Necessity, and that can conform to qualify themselves for them, continue in the Church; and so not only help to promote the Government they espouse, but also carry on the Interest of peace, General Charity, Loyalty, and Affection to the Queen, and to the Subject of every side.

The Dissenters, as Dissenters, can have no Reason to covet places; the pretence of keeping out Men that would disserve the publick would be over; for where there is but one undivided Interest in Government, there can be no subsistence for Factions and parties.

What then can a Dissenter, as a Dissenter, covet a publick Employment for? 'Tis plain, 'tis his Interest the Church party should have the Government, and that if 'twas in his Hands, or offer'd to him, he could not tell what to do with it, but would petition the Church party to take it again; he can have nothing to ask, but to be sure of his Liberty and property his Toleration and Estate.

In order to this, being effectually secur'd, there wants nothing, but that the Church party be fully satisfy'd that he never can encroach on the Government, alter or disturb it, which without damage to his own Interest must be impossible; and the Church-Man being assur'd of this, can have no manner of Ground to wish the Toleration repeal'd, or the property of the Dissenter weaken'd, because he is a willing Subject, and always will be a Friend to the Government, from the irrefragable Reasons of his own Safety and Interest.

After this mutual Confidence settl'd, a Dissenter can never desire a place in the Government, but for the profit or Honour; and if he cannot dispose with himself about that, he must bring his Conscience and the Salary, or his  
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Conscience and the Title together, and let them make the Bargain as well as they can, the State is no way concern'd in it.

I see no difficulty remains, but how to procure this mutual Confidence of parties, which tho' it be remote, is far from impossible; but I am in so fair a Way to be ruin'd, for Describing the *shortest Way* to undo us, that I shall be very wary how I prescribe more *short Ways*, without the Direction of my Superiors, and that Concurring, I doubt not it might easily be brought to pass.

But Two immediate Circumstances would contribute a great deal towards it, and both these I have often driven at; and while any thing I shall write will be read, shall continue to aim at it, and this is a Communion of Charity and Civility between the parties; this would make Way for a right Understanding; and tho' there are differences in Religion, there need be none in Affection, in Society, in Neighbourhood; people may be good Neighbours, good Friends, and united in Interest, tho' one goes to the Church and tother to the Meeting-House; let the Scribe be who lives best, and the Contention of the Clergy who shall preach Best, and by this make as many parties and Factions as they please; let them preach one another's Hearers away, and Increase and Decrease according to the Genuine, Honest Lives and Doctrines of the party, then the best Church will be the biggest Church; they who preach Best, and practice Best, will have the most of their side; and that Church which has the most of its side, will soon have the upper Hand, for Number always prevails.

Nay, it seems a Reflection on both sides in my Opinion, that here should be such striving, such pushing at power, and making Interest by parties about Religion: let them leave Religion to Her own Methods: The *Coffee-House* and the *Club* need not be concern'd about Her, let which side soever have the Choice of Sheriffs, Mayors and Parliament Men: if it must be Religion that is in Dispute, let the Dispute be managed as a religious One, and no otherwise: let the Lives and Doctrines of the parties alone to Fight it out: they who have the best principles, and live best up to them, will certainly get the better of it at last; and if Governments and Interest of parties stood but Neuter, it would quickly appear who are the people.

But to touch a little the particulars: If this Union of Interest be ever attempted, there must be first a Union of Charity.

First, The Dissenters, in whose Name I have pretended to say, that they are willing to live peaceably and quietly under the establish'd Government, should Evidence it by practice: they, who among the Dissenters, are disturb'd at the profits and Trust of the Government being taken from them and given to the Churchmen, are to blame, are obstructors of their General peace, if not Enemies to it; for as Dissenters, First, 'Tis not a Farthing Advantage to your General Interest, if it be your Interest the Church party should have the Government: and if you would all Vote for a Church of England Magistracy if it were in your Choice, Who shou'd have the places and profits of the Government, but those to whom you commit the Government? To desire it otherwise would be unreasonable. — But the main Case lies here, you wou'd not be excluded, as unqualify'd and dangerous people, With.

Without Offence, let me say one Thing: that proceeds from the Jealousies infus'd in the Church party, that you covet all, and that you would throw them out of the Saddle, to set your selves in: and this Jealousie proceeds from the eagerness to get into places, and the Dissatisfaction you express for being shut out.

Convince them that 'tis a Mistake, as indeed it must be if you are in your Senses: and let them know, by the Effects, that they are in the Wrong, and you will then never be excluded from places as dangerous people, but, in time, be admitted equally with all the Loyal Subjects of the Nation.

I know no Reason a Dissenter has to desire any Concern in the Government but the Gain of it; for if since 'twas in his power to remove the Government, he would place it just where it is, he can have no design to do it any Injury: if then the profits of places and Trust be the Case, my Advice to the Dissenters, is to convince the Church Men by a General Quietness, and Unanimous Concurrence with the Government, that however they are divided in principles, they are one Body of *English* Men, under that very Government both of them like, and which both of them would, if it were dissolv'd, voluntarily choose to Erect again: that they have but one Interest one End, one Design, and can never be separated without an Injury to both have one Crown, one parliament, and are but one people, and never desire to be otherwise: and if both sides came to a satisfaction of this point, there would be no more excluding of parties for Religion: Tests, Sacraments and occasional Conformities, which are now the Scandal of both sides, would sink of themselves, the Causes of them would die, and the Effects could not survive: 'twould be every Man's Interest to support what was every Man's Choice to set up; every Man would desire to maintain that Government which every Man would endeavour to restore; and he that injur'd it, would equally be abhor'd by all sides.

But all the Work does not lie on the Dissenters side neither, and since I have once anger'd both sides, by speaking under a disguise, I can but run the same Fate in speaking plainly.

The Church of *England* Men must put their Hand to this Work, or it will never be brought to pass.

Some have started an unkind Objection in the World, That there is no real desire in the Church Party ever to come to an Accomodation with the Dissenters.

This may be true of some People in the Church, but it cannot be true of the General Body of the *English* Church, of whom, as I before made a Provisional Cautious, I am Treating; nor can it be true of any that call themselves Church Men, unless one of those two Cases are in it: First, That they are only Incendiaries and Disturbers of the Nation, who Act under the Mask of the Church Profession, but are really Enemies of both; Or, Secondly, That they are Mad men, bereav'd both of their Religious and Politick Senses.

We have had it Printed, with an Assurance I have wondred at, that the moderate Members of the Church of *England*, call'd *Low Church Men*, are worse than the Dissenters; are *Panaticks* in Masquerade; and possibly such Men as are of that Opinion, would be as much disturb'd if all the Dissenters should conform, as if all the Moderate Church Men should turn Dissenters; because then

then their own Principles would be exploded immediately by all good Men, and their Persons mark'd as the General Incendiaries of the Nation; all the Sin of Politick Schism would plainly lye at their Doors; and not only so, but the moderate Gentlemen of the Church of England, are the Men of Temper, and of Charity, Men of Liberty, of Candour, and of Principles, and this makes them averse to Oppression and Persecution.

The Church of England is particularly denominated from these Men; I call all that Part of the Church, moderate Men, who are true Genuine Conformists to the Church, in Doctrine and Discipline, but neither bigotted to their Opinions, nor tainted with Tyranny and Oppression, who are of the Church, because they think it's the truest Way of Worship; who speaking of Religion, are Protestants, and good Christians; speaking of Politicks, are Loyal Subjects to the Crown: but withall, are English Men, and fill'd with Charity to those who differ from them, cautious of English Liberty, and forward not to oppress their Neighbours.

Nay, even Men of higher and straighter Principles, who think hard of those who Dissent from them, yet are not for oppressing them, and to make Pretences where they cannot find them, to ruin Families for Opinion in Religion.

If the Church has the Government, and the Dissenters are pleas'd with its being so, what have they to desire? If they have all the Profits of it, and the Dissenters, with Confidence, commit themselves to their Protection, what can they ask more? What other Reason can those Gentlemen, who are so hot against the Dissenters, give, why they should be oppress'd, but their Fear of them as a Party? This fear is thus prov'd to be absurd and groundless, and therefore I think the Consequence is plain.

Those People who drive at the suppressing the Dissenters, cannot be Friends to the Church, nor to the Government: 'tis true, it would be better for the Church there was no Schism, no Breach on Account of Opinion: but since there is, and they cannot pretend to bring all the Dissenters back again, unless they will set up the *shortest Way*, it cannot agree with Policy, or Publick Interest, to make them uneasy.

If they won't Conform to the Church, 'tis impossible to make them: but if they will Conform to the Government, if they are not Dissenters in Politicks, if they Assent and Consent in Publick Matters, if they acquiesce with a Church of England Government, and if it were in their Power would chose it from all others, as is I think fairly prov'd, then it cannot be the Interest of the Government to disturb them, and they who would crush them, expose them, or widen the Breach between them and the Church, cannot be Friends to the Church, or to the Government, and ought to be treated accordingly.

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